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"ON THOUGHT-TURNING"
AND
"A NURSERY TALK"

BY
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WITH
"A NURSE'S NOTES"
BY A NURSE.

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On Thought-Turning as a Factor in the Training of Character.

BY HELEN WEBB, M.B., (LOND.)

BEFORE beginning to decide whether anything is, or is not, of importance in the training of character, let us be perfectly clear as to what we mean by the word "*character*".

It has been said that disposition, intellect, and genius come by nature, and that *character is an achievement*. By it we understand something which increases in each of us as we go through life, something which is a resultant of our environment acting upon the disposition, intellect, etc., with which we are born.

We live by ideas which constantly pour in through every channel of sense and understanding. We think thoughts—from these arise conduct, from conduct comes *character*. Character in its turn helps to determine future conduct.

Someone has said that a man is what he has made himself, by the thoughts which he has allowed himself, the words he has spoken, *the deeds he has done*.

Let us, then, have clearly before our minds at the outset, the two forces which, acting and reacting upon each other, build up character.

(a) The tendencies with which each individual child is born.

(b) The external influences of every kind which surround the human being from its birth to the grave.

(a) When the child comes into the world his natural

tendencies exist as possibilities, hidden away somewhere in his potential nervous system. "In continuance they are fashioned while as yet there is none of them." They begin, however, to show themselves with astounding promptitude. First appear those which are common to the human baby as such, but almost simultaneously those which characterise the individual. And let us never forget that an infant, however young, is a *person*, and has a *personality* of its very own.

(b) External influences, too, from the moment of birth, affect the child through every sense which is, as yet, ready to receive them. They begin to *modify his very substance long before he can discriminate*. The sum of these influences makes up his environment which (however feebly), from the very beginning, acts and reacts upon the original tendencies born in him. No doubt that in the very first day of life the elementary stirrings of character (as just defined) are taking place, and by the end of the first month assuredly, character, shown by habits of conduct, may be plainly seen even by casual observers. So it comes about that, from its birth on, those who have the care of an infant are every day and hour, rightly or wrongly, either in a positive or negative way, shaping the character of the future man.

In nature's methods of development there is no haste, but no time is lost. Have you ever reflected that from the moment we put a seed in the ground to the time when we see a perfect plant, and still on while this has life, a never-ceasing process of alternation of activity or rest (the one important as the other) continues without intermission? Wherever there is life this is so. Let us recognise it in the growth of our children's characters. The good seed may fall, as we know, on very different kinds of ground, and fall into the hands of very different gardeners, and we have high authority for knowing that on both its future will greatly depend.

It is safe to say that over-meddlesome people about a

child will do much more harm than those who do too little. Everything with which the child comes in contact has an influence of some kind. It therefore behoves us all to have some elementary ideas of the ways in which we affect character in our relations with those under our care, and how immensely this will, later on, determine the relations of those persons with the world and themselves.

The kind and degree of the first factors of character of course differ in every instance. We may safely say that in the whole history of the world no two people have even been born who exactly resembled each other. In some children the inherited tendencies have hardly to be counted with. The child seems to be born amenable to outward circumstances, and has more inclination to do what the Frenchman called "stay put" than to strike out in any course of its own. Such children may be easy to train. They are not, however, so interesting as the babies who, from the time they notice anything, readily convince the most unbelieving that they are indeed *persons*. These latter are often called "wilful," and spoken of as having "wills of their own." What they have are strong passions, strong desires, an appreciation of desirable objects, and quick intelligence. When these abound, there is all the more need to train the will which must finally control and have the management of everything. In proportion to the more abounding vitality and intellect will be the strength of temptation. Especially happy is such a child if, when he comes to fight his own battles with his natural tendencies, he finds them already in some degree, under the guidance of habits of control. The task of his parents is especially difficult, but, if they carry it out rightly, they will have their reward.

Perhaps one may here point out that in adult life the person described as "wilful" is generally one who is *without real power of will*. His passions and desires succeed each other at the suggestion of circumstances, merely following the lead of associated ideas, and control *him*, rather than

he *them*. Even when he knows that he *ought* to get the mastery over an inclination to do wrong, he has not the power to turn his thoughts into another channel. His hand is, therefore, not on the helm of his own life.

When we come to consider the life history of the growing character of a human being we can divide it roughly, but naturally, into periods. Anyone with practical experience of children will realise that in the average child (one hates the expression for of course there does not exist such a thing as the "average child") the time from birth to somewhere in the fourth year, or rather earlier, constitutes a well marked period, from that time till about twelve another, and from then to adult life a third. These divisions are not hard and fast, they always overlap in every child, and if such a thing were possible as that the same child could have different surroundings, they might even vary in the individual. All develop differently and at different rates. For the practical purposes of the present paper these periods are useful, and each broadly calls for a different kind of help from those with whom the child lives. Each has its special characteristics, opportunities, and risks for the growing character.

The first few years of life constitute a period of enormous physical and intellectual activity. During this time the new-born baby has to become the intelligent person of three or four. Not only does he learn to walk, and talk at least one language, and perform many complex actions, but he takes in the whole world which surrounds him, and gets into relation with its vital interests. He not only talks, but has much to talk about, and is every moment gathering new facts and impressions through his enormously active "five senses." In short, a human being accomplishes more in this time than in any other three years of life. The busy intellect and developing physical powers have hard work to keep pace with it all.

In the second period (three or four to about twelve) the

child learns to think more consecutively about the things which, during the first years, he had realised, and to comprehend more definitely the why and wherefore of them. During this time he takes gradually into his own hands the management of much of his own conduct. That he may do this early and safely will always in great part depend upon our having rightly done our part towards him in earlier years.

Of the third or growing up years I shall not speak here. My business will be almost entirely with the first few years of life.

In each period of growth, those about a child have a place to fill, in some ways one of action, in others of self-effacement. The fact of the existence of the Parents' Union shows that we here assume as much. We exist as a Union for the furtherance of that aspect of education which more especially watches over the development of character, and we know that habits, either formed or prevented, play a large part in this work. We are agreed that the greater part of the common acts of daily life ought to be made habitual, and that for all the little things which the Devonshire peasant would describe as "behaviour," early to become established as habits, leaves the individual free to give attention to the larger interests of life. We know the immense start in life it gives for children to enter upon the second period with nice table manners, cleanly tidy habits, a pleasant way of speaking, punctuality and neatness, and a whole string of daily virtues which it would take too long to enumerate.

In her excellent book on the mind of a child, Mrs. Ennis Richmond has said: "There is at the outset one most helpful and delightful reflection with regard to the education of little children. Teaching a child to do right is in itself teaching it not to do wrong." Again: "From the moment that a child lives he is a person, and he must either go forwards or backwards; the entrance of life precludes standing still." These

are two big truths. If you want to keep out evil, put in good. The infant from its birth is a person to be respected, and is either going forward in the path of right living or sowing the whirlwind for itself or others in the time to come.

We often find it hard to believe in the existence of the little seeds of undesirable habits in a very young child, or to realise that many small actions, which at first seem only pretty and intelligent, if allowed to be repeated and continued in, will presently appear as grave or at least inconvenient faults. By the time we recognise them as such we have generally lost the right moment for preventing them, and their eradication becomes a long, clumsy, artificial process, as different as possible from the beautifully natural method of prevention. This should be used on their first appearance, and to its possibility ever parent and nurse ought to be alive.

Commonly we let a fault grow, and then try to stamp it out by punishment, when but for our ignorance and laziness, the thing would never have grown beyond the proportions of a danger signal. The truth is that long before a child is capable of managing his own will, we ought to be laying down lines of good habits in his character which, as soon as ever he is ready to take over the government of his own life, in however small a degree, he will find as paths of least resistance already established in his nervous system.

We have just spoken of letting faults grow, and then trying to eradicate them. Have you not noticed that a most fertile garden for the growth of these weeds of bad habit exists during what I have called the first period of a child's life? It is at about four, when the "attractive baby" is turning into the "troublesome child," that so many parents wring their hands, and say: "What am I to do with Tommy; he is so disobedient?" "I wonder how Willie *can* be so selfish?" "Why is Mary so greedy?" "How is it best to get rid of these faults?" How, indeed? These weeds have grown in the night while we slept, dreaming that

while baby is so little nothing can make much difference. Tommy was so high-spirited, it was funny to see him do one thing when he was told to do another. Willie was such a pet one had to give him everything he asked for. "You should see how Mary goes for the chocolate-box the moment she toddles into the drawing-room."

"But what," say the parents, "ought one to have done?" The first time Tommy showed signs of disobedience they ought to have been recognised as such; they ought to have seen that Willie acted generously instead of selfishly; and that Mary was not encouraged in greediness.

If we can really do much of this, and from the first prevent wrong *conduct*, by seeing that the children *do* rightly long before they can have the power of will to control their own actions, we shall be astonished how few faults there will be to punish by the time we come to that critical fourth year. Furthermore, as soon as the children are old enough to begin the management of their own conduct they will find it a *comparatively* easy matter to walk along the right path. Their moral enemies will, we may venture to say, seem fewer and weaker than they would otherwise have been.

Now all parents and nurses have in their hands a means for the accomplishment of this, a power which if rightly used, will bring about right conduct, and prevent the beginnings of wrong-doing. We know that if we would prevent wrong action we in our own lives must get rid of wrong thoughts, that an inclination to what is forbidden disappears not before "I won't, I won't," but before the power of turning our thoughts into other channels. It costs us adults no small effort, backed by judgment and understanding, thus to turn our thoughts, and to the end of life we are often grateful to some friend who, in the difficult moment, helps us to do it. We realise that before the child has anything of the nature of a trained will he must be helped to turn his thoughts. Before he knows good from evil we must hoose good for him and see that he does it. Traces of

the path of Duty are in this way marked out in the nervous system long before that robust goddess can be expected to walk along it in broad daylight. When she comes she ought not to have to begin by engaging in earth-works, or be overwhelmed by floods, against which dams and dykes should long before have been put up.

We have already repeated more than once that action is an outcome of thought. And we have seen that whatever *will* may be, and whatever its relation to thought, in practice, will-control means thought-control; and further, that the power of thought-control really means the power to *turn the thoughts*, just as the control of a vessel means the power to turn a helm. In later life we ought all to be able to turn our own thoughts from evil to good, and so bring about right action, yet many of us are grateful for outside help in the matter. For the little child this must always be done by others, and it is only as it is wisely and rightly accomplished for him that the first beginnings of faults of character can be prevented, and right conduct make choice of right actions easier in the future. During the first years of life he dwells but a short time on anything and quickly flits from interest to interest as is suggested by the external world of things with which he is all the time busy taking in and realising.

The young child tends in the main to be good, and to do what he is bid, and in large measure to respond to the *real* expectations of the people around him, but to his bright, intelligent observation life is full of temptation. Some day, suddenly, he fails to be obedient, puts himself for a moment in the opposition, and that is the critical time when we must step in and help. Here the wise mother recognises first of all how little the opposition means. It is nothing but a momentary whim. She gives a moment or two of wise neglect, and then turns his thoughts to a new aspect of the thing which baby has been told to do. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it will be done at once. One knows how

passing are the mental states of a young child, and that nothing makes a very deep impression unless it is artificially rubbed in; the thing to do when the little seed of evil appears, is to avoid giving it too much importance and marking it in the child's consciousness by talk or opposition. The sensible mother does not dwell upon the difficulty, and before the child knows it, turns him into the path of right action. This we call "thought-turning."

Let me give a few instances. Some day baby won't eat his food: it has struck him at the moment that it is a nice play to shut his mouth tight, and blow out his cheeks just when the spoon or cup is approaching his mouth. Here is a first instance of naughty table manners. If now we can tell him it is naughty and wrong, and not to be done, he may or may not understand, he may or may not obey, but we may be certain that his brain cells will remember the fun and the attention his little trick has elicited, and he will try the same another time, and then another, so beginning the formation of an ugly habit. If, however, we take no notice, but talk of something else, of something he saw out walking, of what the pussy has done, or of some fine play he has had with his toys, baby's attention turns at once in another direction, and the mouth receives the food gratefully. So a certain amount of wholesome food is got down at the proper rate, and we establish an understanding with a healthy stomach, and help to lay the foundation of a good digestion which will stand by the child in after life. When later it comes into his own hands to decide what he will eat, drink, and avoid, his choice will be made on the basis of a habit of wholesome regular feeding. If, instead of treating the matter this way, we try and persuade and coax, offering him this when he will not eat that, baby is brought into the field of choice before he has knowledge enough to choose. We encourage the beginnings of meaningless likes and dislikes and fidgety ways about food, and even of dyspeptic habits.

Another instance. Perhaps baby has had his bath, and

nurse is beginning to dress him. He says, "No," he will go on with a delightful game begun when in his bath towel. Coax, persuade, or scold, and the same difficulty will crop up again to-morrow. Say, "Let me see, which arm did we think we would put in first?" and the toilette goes merrily forward. Another brick has been put into the edifice of right habit by another tiny piece of right action. Again, it is bedtime, and baby does not want to go up to the nursery. A little talk about any other subject, and then—"Which of us will get first to the foot of the stairs?" or something of the same kind gets the thing done. Or, a little child shows a tendency to outbursts of temper which are apt to arise from the merest trifles. The watchful parent or nurse should be able to see by many little signs when these are coming on. They should first of all avoid as far as possible, the kind of occasion which it is noticed produces them, and if this is impossible, and the storm seems about to break, send the child a message, or give it some interesting occupation, or ask some arresting question before it itself knows that the temper is coming. It is remarkable how, in response to the turn of thought, the clouds will clear away.

In all these cases we avoid certain bad habits by forming certain good ones. This in very early times we intentionally do, without any appeal to reason, or any call upon conscious will. At one-and-a-half or two, we cannot depend upon a person having material to reason with so as to make a right choice, and we know that he has not the power to turn his own thoughts from temptation. His thoughts are momentary; they flit from object to object without control. He is busy looking out at life and taking in everything in succession. Life is to him a panorama from morning to night. When a young child, living life as it should live it, happily and without responsibility, looks you in the face and says he won't do a thing, just try to realise that it is a passing whim to be wiped out by the next interest. Don't mark the occasion with talk and opposition. "That is naughty,"

"You must not," or appeal too cheaply to his strongest emotions by saying, "Do it to please mother". Don't in short bring a sledge hammer to crack a hazel nut, but just try change of thought. A baby of eighteen months had much better not hear too much about naughtiness, and will very likely feel it fun to do what it is told not, but it will be a great help to its thoroughly understanding these things in the future if it now does the thing it ought to do.

Believe me, the thing that really matters at this stage of life is that the child *do the right thing in the right way*, eat his supper, put on his clothes, go to bed and not lose his temper.

This steady laying down of habits through repeated right conduct is to later will-control what the perpetual small restless movements of a young infant lying on its mother's knee are to the purposeful movements of a later time. They educate the nervous system and make it ready to be guided later by centres as yet undeveloped.

If we see, without fuss, that a young child is tidy it will soon delight in tidiness, if we see that it obeys we shall later find it obedient.

Do I hear someone say, "But isn't all this an insult to an intelligent child?" It is no more an insult than feeding him with a spoon before he can hold the spoon himself, or carrying him before he can walk. When the time comes that he has learnt to walk (by *walking*, mind you, not by *being told to*) we don't carry him, and we do not insult the boy of six by feeding him with a spoon. As soon as the individual child can understand "No," say it about the more important things which are to be avoided, but if you do so and it is not enough, you must be prepared to do his thought-turning for him, and not call him naughty because he cannot do it for himself. We can draw no hard and fast line and say that on such-and-such a day of such a month any child can do so-and-so. The watchful parent or nurse will recognise the signs when the time comes. Once a child is old enough to

realise that in any department he is being managed, it is too late to manage him in that department. The chances are that by that time, if we have done our part wisely, he will be well able to manage himself. When the day comes that you can say to the child about anything, with a certainty of being understood, "When you feel tempted to do anything you ought not to do, just think of something else, or go and do something else," it has entered on the second stage of life. He will still often need help from others in his thought-turning, but as soon as possible show him how, in many instances, to do it for himself. A very young child can be taught that in the presence of a temptation to do something forbidden, the best plan is to go and do something else which is also pleasant but allowable. This, of course, presupposes a knowledge of right and wrong, of allowed and forbidden, of which every child is capable long before it has the power to act upon its knowledge.

Critical moments will always be arising when a new idea strikes across the line of what seemed a well-formed habit, and one may be tempted to feel for a moment that all one's work was in vain. In these cases, however, the new idea is probably, as I have said before, a very transitory one, and refers more to some little detail of the habitual action than to the action itself. Let me tell of an instance to illustrate what I mean. A little boy of one-and-a-half to two years old, who greatly delighted in his bath, was in the habit of coming out of it genially and smilingly the moment he was told. The same proceedings were always gone through. After the real washing there was always a happy moment of splashing while nurse got ready the bath towel. Then she said, "Now sir, now, sir! I am coming!" and out he came laughing and still enjoying himself on her knee. It was lovely to see the end of such joy so joyously borne. One day, however, the new idea came in. The little boy thought he would not, and the "I am coming" met with a refusal. I can't remember what nurse said or did, but she

was greatly discouraged, and said, "What after all is the good of habit?" But a wise friend said, "Habit is strong, but the new idea for the moment is stronger," and the baby's mother decided that for a few days no order should be given. In this way no opportunity for disobedience occurred, and the little boy was just lifted out while a cheerful and interesting conversation was kept up on all kinds of topics. Very soon he responded to the order as before, and as promptly stopped play and came out the moment he was told.

Again, a little boy, rather older than this last, was told one day by his nurse, his mother being present, to run into the next room and ask a servant for a special reel of cotton that was in a special place. Generally he went happily to carry a message, but this time he refused, said it was too hard, and almost cried. Both mother and nurse attempted to make the message clear, but with small success. He showed signs of obstinacy and "stiff back" over it, so the mother took the boy out with her to the head of the stairs and spoke of other things. When he came back into the nursery he was asked, "Have you brought the cotton?" and he went happily to fetch it.

Now someone here is, I am sure, saying, "But that was not prompt obedience. Ought we not to teach our children prompt obedience?" Yes, we ought, and though these are not instances of prompt obedience, I contend that they are of the way to get it later on.

Let us look for a moment at the way many parents and nurses treat a refusal of a child to carry a message. The child refuses to go. Nurse, after more or less coaxing, says, "You must." The child begins to look stubborn and cries. Nurse says, "It's no use crying, here I stay and there you stay till it is done," or "Sit in that corner till you make up your mind to go." Most likely the nurse conquers, but only after a hard battle, which leaves in the mind of the child a sense of soreness and injustice, and creates such an episode

as we should most wish to avoid. I ask you, *Is this prompt obedience either?* In the thought-turning method, spoken of above, the brain impression will probably be simply that made by the action of going the message; in the latter way there must certainly be impressed upon the brain something which is likely to be the beginning of a habit of disobedience or sulkiness, or some other bad thing.

From the very earliest time most babies will respond to "ought" and "must" while in the presence of those people who really mean it. They are, however, quick to detect weakness of will, and like the Israelites, who could not obey Moses when he was no longer present with them, young children are not often influenced by an order when the personality is no longer present. A tiny child may understand "No," and that a thing ought not to be done, but just because he cannot control his own thoughts (practically cannot turn his own thoughts), this will not withhold him from doing it. *E.g.*, some pretty ornament or plant is within his reach. He longs to touch it, but is told not to. Mother says it is a "No," and at the moment he understands as well as she does what a "No" is. If it has not yet occurred to him to disobey, her presence may keep him from it. Most likely it won't but it may. Mother goes away and someone else comes in—say an aunt or a friend who does not know nor care whether he touches the forbidden object. Baby is still quite clear it is "No." In fact, he probably shows the tempting object to the new comer, and tells her it is a "No." All this time his thoughts and attention are dwelling on it. It fascinates him more and more: he comes nearer and nearer. Temptation is too much. He touches the ornament, takes it in his hand, and very likely even at that moment, again cheerfully says that it is a "No."

From this instance, and from many others, it is plain that a child understands what is right and wrong; what "may" and "may not" mean long before he is able to act upon the knowledge. It is not uncommon to hear a little

thing of three, or younger, sententiously advising and reproving his elder sisters and brothers to and from the paths of virtue and those of wickedness, when we know that he himself could not, against a slight temptation, act up to what he is advising. Perhaps in this he is not unlike many other people who know very well what course their neighbours ought to follow, but are not so successful in guiding their own lives. By the child who touched the ornament, the intellectual meaning of the word "No" was perfectly understood, but no more than the drunkard could he turn his thoughts away from the strong temptation.

There are a few points which, if remembered, will make it easier to give this help to young children. First of all, a habit on your part of chatting now and then to the baby about the things around it, which are sure to interest it, and which its intelligence drinks in greedily, gives it a habit of attending to the spoken word, and makes it far easier to turn thought readily when the occasion arises. The child who is talked to even before it understands anything (just like the cat or dog who is conversed with frequently) looks up readily when addressed and gives its whole attention at once, even if only for a moment. The child whose mother or nurse seldom addresses it, except to give an order (the world is full of children so treated) gives slow attention to the spoken word, and is not easy to recall from the vague panorama of passing impressions. Again, when you want to tell a child to do something, remember not only that example is better than precept, but that precept may be brought wonderfully into line with example. Instead of "Willie, shut the door," say, "Willie" (be sure he looks at you and gives his attention), "we always shut the door, don't we?" and so on.

Have I spoken too much as if I believed this thought-turning was something to be done once for all, a magic spell which would work without failure? No, indeed, it is not. It needs a constant alertness and ingenuity. There will be much repetition of the same difficulties, which will fre-

quently need new ideas to meet them. Besides, the ways of thought-turning which we need for an infant first taking notice are not what we shall require for the same child at a year old; by eighteen months it will be different, and by two years different again. Every day brings new difficulties for the watchful eye to detect, and new ideas will be required to meet them. All through life the power of giving anyone a helpful turn of thought will depend upon tact, love, and insight into the character with which one is at the moment dealing.

A Nursery Talk.

EVERYONE likely to read this paper will, I expect, know what the Parents' National Educational Union is, and for what purposes it exists. If not, let me begin by telling them that it is a Union of parents, teachers, and all others interested in education, and that it aims, not only at the study of the best methods of education but at putting these methods into practice. Now some of you nurses may say, "What have *we* to do with education; it is not part of our business! Why not talk to governesses instead of nurses? We have for the most part the charge of children before they come to an age to be educated. We don't meddle with that; we leave it to the governesses, tutors, schoolmistresses and schoolmasters!" If such thoughts are passing through the mind of anyone, I must answer by saying, "I beg your pardon, but cannot agree with you!" The education of which we speak is not merely book-learning, but education in the sense of the training of character, in relation to behaviour, to the formation of habits, and to the whole conduct of life. Such education begins at the moment of the infant's birth, and even for the old does not quite cease at this side of the grave. It really consists of all the influences of every kind which surround us through life; but on the little child the things about it act with a very special directness and power. These surroundings are every moment of the day intentionally or unintentionally, shaping the life of the man or woman into whom the child is to develop, and this fact brings a great weight of responsibility on the shoulders of all who have anything to do with little children from the very first. One is almost tempted, realising as one does the specially active development which goes on during the first three or four years of life, to say that the moral responsi-

bility of the nurse is even greater than that of the teacher. A child learns more in those few years than in any other four years of life.

Children, like plants, can grow up naturally and wholesomely, or their minds and characters may be twisted and injured in the growth. We all know that when a gardener wants to get a specimen of any plant or tree to be as fine and healthy as possible, he has to find out how it is natural for it to grow; in other words, what are the laws of its growth. He must know the kind of earth it had where it grew best as a wild plant, for all kinds of plants have some where been found in the wild state; how much moisture it liked, what shelter from the wind, how much sunshine, and so on. He knows that if he does not give the plant all that is good for it in these ways and in others, it will not become as fine and beautiful as it might otherwise have been. Now the plants to which we are gardeners are nothing less than human beings, and it is about as awful and solemn a thought as can well come to us, that by ignorance, or carelessness, to say nothing of evil intention, we may place such stumbling-blocks in the way of a little child as may make it less good and useful than it might otherwise have been.

There is a very deep reason why all the things, small and great, done and said around it have so much effect upon the child's character. It is because that which anyone sees, or does, or hears, or in any other way becomes aware of, makes at the time a real change in the very substance of that person's brain. Every time the same thing happens again that change in the brain becomes more marked and permanent. As the result of this the brain builds into itself all the influences which surround the child, and it comes to pass that each time a thing is done, it becomes easier to do the same thing again. We are all familiar with the fact that "practice makes perfect," and that by doing the same thing over and over again we arrive at doing it so easily, that at last we are not ourselves aware of the act. The first time, for instance, that anyone tells a lie, they do it with diffi-

culty; they do it awkwardly; they blush and show themselves uncomfortable, so that those observing may notice that something is wrong. Next time it comes more easily, next to that more easily still, and so on until some people reach a point of untruthfulness when a lie rises to the lips more readily than the truth. This is what we mean by "forming a habit," and habits may be formed in almost anyone at any time, given the proper conditions of tendency and surroundings. They grow more readily, however, in the young boy or girls than in the man or woman, and those in charge of a little child can, thoughtlessly or intentionally, shape habits of mind or body in almost any direction. Those who are responsible for children should never forget that, whether they mean it or not, this great forming power is constantly at work upon the children, and that they can do nothing (especially in the children's presence) which does not influence them for good or for evil.

Your object, therefore, in the training and education of a young child should be to form good habits about the *small things of daily life*; to teach it to be clean and nice in its personal ways; bright, cheerful, and natural in its manner; to eat its food prettily without having to think about how it does it; to be industrious and neat, swift and cheerful to obey, truthful and open, and to be careful that it sees and hears nothing in the nursery which it feels its nurse would wish to have concealed from mother or father. This last, if it ever happens, is for the child a first seed of deceit and untruthfulness. For father and mother are to the young child as God Almighty, and the most elementary righteousness demands that, in your position, you should be yourselves absolutely loyal to those parents, and cultivate the same spirit in the children under your care. Part of this loyalty to the children's parents, one must remember, consists of loyalty to the children themselves. Remember—at least once or twice a day, if you cannot oftener—remember when you say your prayers that the *child you have in your charge is a future man or woman*, and that in no small degree,

through *your* wisdom or folly, its life will be affected and shaped. The habit of such a thought would be an immense help against carelessness in a most sacred charge, and would also bring with it a real reverence for the children.

Does it seem strange to you that one should speak of reverence for a child? Surely not, for Christ said, "Take heed that ye offend not—despise not—hinder not—one of these little ones." "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven," and if our Lord felt such reverence, how much more ought we to do so.

One way in which we show want of reverence for children is by gossiping in their presence, and talking before them of things not suitable for them to hear about. Moreover, this leads to much other evil. It makes the child ask questions which you may be tempted to answer untruthfully, and there is also the temptation to oneself to tell the child not to repeat to its mother what it had heard said. Neither must one talk about children in their presence, pretending to oneself that they do not hear and understand what one knows very well they are especially ready to take up. A common subject of conversation with grown-up people in the presence of children is, the personal appearance of the children, or their peculiarities, "her lovely hair," "his sturdy legs," etc., or it may be "she is always so shy," "she loves gentlemen," "I cannot get him to eat any fat, or porridge, or whatever it may be." Think how the modest child shrinks from such remarks, and how self-consciousness is developed as it listens. In this way little peculiarities and haughty ways may come to be regarded by the child quite as distinctions, as something to be cultivated with pride, instead of disappearing, as they ought, under a wise substitution of other interests and a judicious lack of notice. Neither do we show our respect for children by comparing them in their presence, or by quoting the virtues of one child to another, "I am sure Harry wouldn't do that," or, "Mary is a much better girl than you are." Such remarks

are an insult and injury both to the child addressed and the one spoken of, and serve no good purpose.

In the matter of truthfulness, some people seem to imagine that it is of much less consequence if they say that which is not true to children than to grown-up people. As far as we are ourselves concerned the sin is, I suppose, the same in both cases, but an untruth spoken to a child is really more likely to be injurious to it than a similar deception practised on a grown person. If a child asks questions, either tell it the truth, under whatever form it can be best understood, or let it know that it is to be satisfied without an answer to that question just then. A child may ask questions, concerning which the wisest and best thing you can do is to refer it to its mother. She is its natural teacher and knows best how she wishes it taught. If we are not quite straightforward with children we cannot expect them to be so with us, or to get that habit of truthful speech which is such a possession to carry through life. Remember that in keeping a child truthful it is most important not to frighten it into untruthfulness by too great severity. If it be severely punished for some fault, the temptation to hide faults will be so great that it will readily come to conceal them, and not be quite open over anything it happens to have done amiss.

This leads to the great question of the correction of faults. Absolute punishments are seldom needed, and as to if they are, the child's parents alone should have the responsibility of deciding, and alone should administer them. Any nurse who understands little children (and let me tell you that if you have not some measure of such an instinct, you have mistaken your profession, and had better turn to some other work) can get the child's will on her side, and cultivate in it a cheerful obedience. When this is done, and rightly made use of, occasions suggesting the necessity of anything to be called punishment will cease to arise.

We ought never to make use of fear in cultivating the habit of cheerful obedience, for if we do, the obedience will

not be cheerful, and you notice that I always use that word to qualify it. Whenever you give an order or forbid anything, you must have good reasons in your own mind for what you allow or forbid, and the thing forbidden should be something either wrong or injurious, and not forbidden merely because you feel tired, worried, or out of temper at the moment.

Then *you must be consistent*. Children are often bewildered by being allowed to do one day what another day seems to be regarded by the grown-up person in charge as a mortal sin. If you are certain of your moral position and consistent, you need give no further reason. That a thing was forbidden yesterday is, to the mind of a child, sufficient reason why it is forbidden to-day. Your voice and manner ought unconsciously to suggest to the child that there is nothing possible except obedience. You will always find that the chief difference between the people who are obeyed, and those whose orders are set aside almost without notice, is that the former, strong in a sense of righteousness and the necessity of the few orders given, have no expectation of possible disobedience; the latter, doubtful of the real desirability of half their orders, issue them uncertainly and tentatively. The child is quick to gauge expectancy, and when he feels the doubt behind the command, readily puts himself in the opposition. Avoid, therefore, in yourselves, a habit of giving thoughtless commands. Never say "do" or "don't" without real reason, but trust that, if you see or *feel* the reason, the child to whom you speak will be "swift in all obedience."

Do not make the strain of obedience too great. By this I mean, try in some degree to protect the child from the temptation he finds hardest to resist. You cannot, of course remove all temptations; but you can see that he is not tempted more than he can bear. If, for instance, you know that the sugar basin has special temptation for some little child, do not leave it in an accessible place when he is alone,

until you know well that he has the strength of character to resist. Make as few things as possible into sins; for, as someone has wisely said, "He who multiplies sins manufactures criminals".

Believe always in a child's goodness rather than his wickedness. Believe, and let him feel that you believe, that of course he will obey, of course he will speak the truth, of course he will be able to carry out something he undertakes or is asked to do, and that there is no question of his being selfish or jealous, or showing any other bad feelings. If you do this you will have your reward; but if you believe the other way you will reap the whirlwind.

Have you ever read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? If so, you will remember how the naughty little negro Topsy, who played every kind of trick on Miss Ophelia, who thought ill of her, was at once subdued into good conduct by the love and faith of Eva, who thought her capable of all virtue. This was one of the secrets of success in the methods of the great Dr. Arnold, one of the greatest schoolmasters of this century; he believed in his boys, put them on their honour; and they lived up to his expectations.

In giving orders or direction to a child, let them be *affirmative*, not *negative*, e.g., "Now you will carry that carefully," not "Now mind you don't drop that." In this way you make the child believe in itself, and give it confidence in the undertaking.

Again, when a child has done something not quite rightly or well, you will help it much more if you blame the fault rather than the child. When Tommy comes in with muddy boots, say, "Oh, Tommy, look at all that mud. It is not nice on the carpet!" rather than, "Oh, Tommy, you bad boy to bring so much mud on to my carpet!" In the first instance you and Tommy stand side by side, and sympathetically regret the state of the floor; in the latter you set Tommy over against you, and give opportunities for the appearance of the germs of enmity and self-pity—both bad seeds!

In the same way, if it is your pleasant duty to give praise, praise the effort rather than the achievement, and the thing done rather than the child for doing it.

As I said before, every experience leaves its traces in the substance of the brain. All the time, too, while the brain is growing, *everything the child does with his hands* and with his mind as well helps to educate the brain and to make it more powerful in other ways. This is why so much is heard nowadays about children doing handiwork at school, and learning to be deft and skilful with their fingers. It makes their hands more useful, but it also develops their brains. Now there is something connected with this point that I very much want to say to nurses. There are a number of little things which children might do in the nursery and house which would produce this effect even better than the handiwork taught in the schools, and would at the same time make the children wiser and more useful men and women. I mean such things as putting away their own toys, dressing themselves, helping to spread and clear away from the tea-table, helping to dust little things in the room, and even to wash up or dry the tea-things. I am well aware that it is *much* easier to do any or all of these things oneself, or to get the nursery-maid to do them, than to see that a little child learns to do them nicely and neatly. All the same, if you let these opportunities of valuable training pass, you are as much to blame, as if you let the fruit and vegetables decay in a garden because it was too much trouble to gather them, and then sent out to a greengrocer's to buy more. Don't you remember all it meant to each of you to help your own dear mothers to do little things about the house; what honest pride and confidence it gave you to dry the best tea-cups without dropping them, and to rub a bit of mahogany with a rag till you could see your face in it? There would not have been half as much educational value for you in cutting out cardboard boxes, folding paper, etc., etc., good as these exercises may be.

Furthermore, there is great gain for both young and old in a little daily effort, the feeling that something definite has to be done, whether it is pleasant or not. It is much plainer to a child that this something must be accomplished if it is useful, something which is helpful to one it loves, the object of which it can see. Anyone of us will understand a difficult task with ease if it be vitally interesting to us, and to tie your shoes with the prospect of getting out, to dust a row of books and have the pleasure of putting them straight and neat, are no small interests.

Attention to pets is another piece of work where interest will inspire to a bit of effort. The educational value of this is enormous, but it is not to be entrusted to too small children, and we must be sure to see for ourselves that the child is quite regular in feeding the animals, and cleaning their houses and cages.

As the stomach needs rest between meals, and ought not to be constantly filled in the intervals, so the brain of a child, especially of a quite young child, who is taking in new experiences and ideas with a rapidity we cannot possibly realise, requires times of peace and quiet over and above what it gets during sleep. For this reason young children should, as much as possible, *be allowed to amuse themselves quietly alone*. As long as a little child will play by itself on the carpet with a few bricks, sticks or stones, it ought to be allowed to do so. There is no greater mistake than rushing at a baby which is quietly and happily engaged in its own thoughts, snatching it up to look at something out of the window, or dancing it round the room. We show great want of reverence by such interference, and do distinct violence to the baby's development. I do not mean, of course, that when the child has had its quiet time of meditation, and is evidently wishing for more amusement and attention, that you are to neglect it, but there is a time for everything.

Finally, let me say that you have undertaken a profession which, above almost every other, needs patience,

tact, self-sacrifice, and loving kindness, and if I have helped even one or two to see more clearly than they did before that the work they have undertaken is as important and responsible work as there is in the world, because the materials they work upon are the bodies and minds of those children who will be the men and women of the next generation, and that it is impossible to care for the bodies of children without at the same time influencing their minds, I shall be more than rewarded. Truly, those who do their work as it ought to be done, are in a most especial sense about our Father's business.

In conclusion, I should like to quote to you a little poem, probably familiar to many, written by a very great man* to his nurse when he dedicated to her a volume of some of the sweetest children's verses which have ever been written. He was a wise man, and knew much about the growth of the human mind, and never forgot all his life long what he owed to one of the best of nurses:—

“For the long nights you lay awake,
And watched for my unworthy sake;
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land:
For all the story books you read:
For all the pains you comforted:
For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore;
My second mother, my first wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, Nurse, the little book you hold;
And grant it, heaven that all who read
May find as dear a nurse at need;
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright fireside nursery clime,
May hear in it as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice.”

*Robert Louis Stevenson.

A Nurse's Notes.

IN training a child it seems to me that the chief thing to remember from its earliest infancy is straightforwardness in the widest sense: this includes punctuality, order, and simplicity. A well-brought-up infant of three months has his food, sleep, etc., at regular intervals. Supposing nurse is late or early, the law is broken, and though baby cheerfully and willingly takes his food at nurse's new time, I am quite sure that an odd, dissatisfied feeling is started in his mind, and that he if could speak, he might, with reason, tell nurse that if she chooses her time, he surely may choose his. He does not say so, but this is what actually happens. If nurse does not keep a fixed time, baby will not, and nurse will complain that "Baby is as self-willed as his father used to be," and say "It runs in the family," forgetting or perhaps not knowing that the cause of the wilfulness is the slackness that "runs in the nurse." There are no "ifs" or "buts," or "wheels within wheels" in a small child's mind; what is to-day is to-morrow, and for always and everybody. One baby, four months old, of whom I had charge, I used to carry round the nursery just before his bed-time, putting everything into its place. After a few weeks, I one day sat down with him, leaving some things undone, a drawer open, a toy out of its cupboard, and it amused me to see baby fidget and point, until I chose to understand him. I know now the unnecessary strain I put on the child's nerves, for if nurse does something for several times and then suddenly seems to think it does not matter, what a feeling of unrest is started. I feel very strongly on the question of habit in tiny children, for the want of it is, I think, at the bottom of many a high temperature and nervous disorder. Something that has become an everyday habit is one day neglected, and it is

as fatal to nurse as to baby if this first time is used as a precedent for other times, *e.g.*, nurse has been in the habit of playing with baby for ten minutes before he goes to bed; a day comes when she thinks she cannot spare those minutes, and baby is popped into bed without his play. It is more than likely that he will fidget and perhaps cry. He may not be conscious of what is wrong, but let this happen two or three more times and he has discovered that there is no law relating to bed time. In consequence, if he does not want to go to bed, not only nurse, but the whole household know about it, and "nuss" (a less superior person than nurse) will shake her head and say "Ah, just like Johnny was at his age." Habit means law to a child. There either is such and such a law or there is not. A broken law an ordinary honest child's mind could not conceive. Tom, aged three, has formed the habit of never wearing his hat in the house, and it is interesting what that habit means to him—he voluntarily takes off his hat when he goes into a shop or a railway station. One morning his father ran upstairs to the nursery wearing his hat and coat; he had come to say good-bye before starting out. Tom immediately said, "I can't 'peak to you with your hat on, I can't look at you." The father took off his hat with an apology. This sort of thing may seem priggish in a child, but with their awful honesty, they think that what is right for them is right for everyone.

Habits of courtesy are difficult or impossible to instil into a child unless nurse herself practises them. In fact, if everyone is habitually courteous to a child, there is no teaching to be done. Let him feel the pleasantness of being "kind to all the people," and there will be few or no so-called manners to teach. Nurse accidentally knocks a child and says, "I am sorry, dear." She may have said it on several occasions before the child turns round and says, "What for you say I'se solly, nurse?" "Because I knocked you and did not mean to do it." It is more than likely you will the next minute receive a deliberate knock with "I'se

solly" after it. Now is the time to finish the lesson. You quietly acknowledge the apology by a word or a smile, but certainly not by a hug or a kiss, for why should courtesies which we take for granted in the grown-up be treated as a sign of genius in the child? Never let us say, "It is manners to stand up when grand-mamma comes in," or, "It is proper to open the door for mother," but if it is needful to say it at all, it should be, "It is kind to, etc." But if nurse always stands up when grand-mamma comes in, and opens the door for mother, and remembers which chair father likes, etc., it is the child's pride and pleasure to do the same.

I was severely brought to book once by a child $2\frac{1}{2}$ years old. He had his shoes and stockings off, and was consequently not allowed to run across the floor; the house boy came in with a scuttle of coals, and when he went out I failed to open the door for him, and this small boy said in a shocked voice, "Nur' is not kind to all the people, no open the door, poor Willum, beg pargont, I'se solly, 'poligise.'" "Willum" was recalled and treated with due courtesy.

Another kind of so-called manners is refined, personal habits. Children have no desire to do untidy, dirty, or awkward things; they don't deliberately think out every act, they just do what is easiest, and the easiest thing to do is the thing they have done before or seen someone else do, or have had it done for them. A baby on your knee coughs or sneezes, if you gently turn his head away from you and never fail to do so every time, baby will naturally turn away his own head. Never let a baby get used to being sticky with food, etc.; sticky they must get, but it ought to be a discomfort to them. They may want mouth and hands rubbed up many times during a meal. We should try and not put them off with "Don't be fussy," etc., for if they feel the discomfort of being dirty it will be an incentive to them to try and be tidy at their meals. If the child wears a feeder it is not becoming to do the rubbing up with that;

how should we like every spill we make at table advertised on our chests? Why do children wear feeders? They begin to wear them long before they are able to feed themselves, so one must conclude that they are put on for nurse's benefit, and surely nurse can put a spoonful of food as easily into a child's mouth as into her own. I own that a child requires more rubbing up during meal times than a grown-up, but why not tie the rubber round the waist instead of displaying it on the chest, where it is unbecoming to the wearer and not appetising to the beholders?

Let everything connected with the food of children be of the cleanest and fittest, and as you would wish to have it in his place, *e.g.*, his cup of food should be brought to him on a tray with a clean cloth on it, let us never think for a moment "anything will do for baby, he does not notice yet." He may not consciously notice it. But unconsciously he forms habits of neatness. We should hear little or nothing of children's untidy table manners or habits, if from infancy they had been accustomed to be served with cleanliness, order, etc.

The following example of respectful kindness to a child is, I think, worth while recording: Harold, aged $2\frac{1}{2}$, has lunch in the dining-room. One day, on coming down to lunch I found a clean napkin spread under his plate; I was annoyed, because the child had such refined habits, so I asked the parlour-maid why she had done it. She said the table-cloth underneath was not quite clean, and she knew Harold would not like to see it.

A child's first lesson in feeding himself begins when he is a baby. The first few times baby has a spoon to play with, see that it is given to him as you would wish him to hold it when he feeds himself. After a short time it is uncomfortable to him to hold it any other way. I think it is unwise to be in haste about teaching a child to feed himself, and when the first lesson is given don't let it be at the beginning of a meal when he is in haste for his food; when he

is less hungry his hand will be more steady. Try not to have a single spill; it means a sharp look-out, and many a hasty rescue, but you will find it well worth while in the end.

Another difficult, but surely necessary lesson a child has to learn is silence, and this I think applies more particularly to meal times. It is very likely that in the nursery there has been only nurse and one child at meals, and the child has been allowed to talk as much as he liked, and has had one person's sole attention. When he goes down to the dining-room, there are the grown-ups, and probably other children, and I think it requires very skilful management to see that everyone has an opportunity to talk. Very often it is the smallest voice that is heard the oftenest. It means hard self-control for a child to be still when he feels he must burst or give his opinion. He must, of course, be shown that he has your sympathy, and at first he must not be tried too far. I think, though, that the best help one can give him is to help him to understand that others feel exactly as he does. He might be encouraged to think it rather a joke that everyone has so much to say before his turn comes. I have seen a small child gaily wait for ten minutes before he could get his father's attention; every unsuccessful attempt he made to speak he hailed as a joke, quietly chuckled, and tried again until he had fairly earned his turn.

The hardest thing I think which we and the babies together have to fight is "stiff back." Our child may have the habit of being happily prompt to answer our small requests, and then a time comes when quite a usual request is made, and we see at once by his manner that he is suffering from "stiff back." There is apparently nothing in what you have said to cause it, and probably he does not know himself why he feels unwilling, but the feeling is there, and has to be gently approached. Without speaking about it, let the child know you know how he feels. A "stiff back" attitude shows that he is prepared and expecting a fight; take the wind out of his sails by an extra friendly attitude.

I think if a single word is said at the time or after about this "stiff back," it makes the disease too interesting. The child will most likely come and say some time after the incident, "I was not very kind this morning," and onemight answer, "Were you not, dear? Then we'll not think or talk about anything so unpleasant." I, of course, suppose the little affair has been happily closed at the time.

The more we are interested in the training of a child, the more we should try to remember that he is a reasonable, intelligent individual, and he is not a problem to be worked out by a given method. And if a child after its earliest years proves "difficult" (a polite word for impolite actions), I think it proves that he has had about him a grown-up who was a too difficult problem for him, and in trying to realise that on Monday $a=a$, on Tuesday $a=b$ and so on through the week, his reasonableness has been thrown off the balance, with the result of years of discomfort to himself and friends.